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Page 2 of Telegram to Amembassy TRIPOLI - PRIORITY

Discussions on the future of the base were held between the two governments in 1964 and 1967. The specific question of the status of Wheelus has not been raised by the Revolutionary Command Council.

B. Question: How does the U.S. view the coup in Libya? Has the Embassy had any contacts with the new regime yet? Have they asked for recognition? Does the recognition question arise? Is Palmer there yet?

Answer: We are in touch with our Embassy offices in Tripoli, Benghazi and Baida. With one exception we know of no incidents involving injuries or any threat to the safety of Americans. Yesterday afternoon an American citizen, Richard Voss, an employee of a private U.S. company, received a flesh ~~wound~~ wound on his arm from a bullet apparently accidentally fired by an excited street guard. No other Americans have been injured. American properties have not been damaged.

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All Libyan air and sea ports have been closed. Oil loading continues, however, and a spokesman for the Revolutionary Command Council said the decision to keep the oil ports closed would be reviewed in a few days. Oil production continues uninterrupted.

While the Embassy has had several contacts with spokesmen for the Revolutionary Command Council, the identity of the Council membership is still unknown. The new Army Chief of Staff is reported to be SA'ADIIN ABU SHUWAYRIB.

A spokesman for the Council has assured our Charge James Blake and also the Charges of France, Great Britain and the USSR that the coup was an internal matter and not directed against any foreign country. He further stated that the army will respect all agreements and treaties and observe the rights of the petroleum companies.

The U.S. Government will continue to follow developments

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closely. It would be premature to comment on the question of recognition.

Ambassador-designate Palmer has not been scheduled to arrive in Libya for several more weeks.

C. Question: Request for comment on recent Libyan Revolutionary Command Council statement that it considers that states which continue to maintain their diplomatic representation in Libya have automatically recognized the new regime.

Answer: I have just seen that statement. The question of recognition is being studied and a determination will be made in due course.

D. Question: What is the general status of Wheelus?

Answer: I would like to give you something on background on the history of our discussions with the Libyan Government on our tenure at Wheelus. The question was first raised in 1964 as a result of Libyan domestic developments, partially stimulated by a speech by President Nasser. As a result of negotiations at

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that time we agreed to the principle of withdrawal and expressed our readiness to discuss the future of Wheelus.

Again in 1967 as a result of our desire to assure the Libyan Government that Wheelus Base activities were not inimical to Libyan interests or foreign policy, we agreed to establish a Libyan Observer Group at Wheelus. That's where the matters rest now.

E. Question: There is a story that Wheelus and the British Air Base in Libya have closed down flight operations. Can you confirm this?

Answer: Upon the outbreak of the coup in Libya, we reduced training activity at Wheelus, pending clarification of the situation, but have continued a certain number of routine medical and supply flights. We have been in touch with the Revolutionary Command Council about these procedures.

F. Question: So you can't confirm that training flights have been suspended?

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Answer: My understanding is that there have not been any training flights in the last few days.

G. Question: What is the present situation in Libya?

Answer: There has been little new development in the situation since the briefing yesterday. The security situation remains calm.

The Revolutionary Command Council has announced that the pumping of oil at Libyan ports will continue as usual. The curfew in Tripoli and Benghazi was relaxed for a few hours yesterday.

H. Question: What about King Idris and his activities?

Answer: I have nothing on that. I understand from press accounts that he is in Greece.

I. Question: Has an emissary of the King approached the United States Government?

Answer: No.

END

RICHARDSON

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